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Essex County Firefighters Graduate from Firefighter I Plus Recruit Training

State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan and Massachusetts Firefighting Academy Interim Director Richard Farrar presented certificates of completion to members of the *Firefighter I Plus* recruit training class in a graduation ceremony on Saturday, February 21, 2004. The recruit graduation took place at the Georgetown Club, Georgetown, Massachusetts.

The *Firefighter I Plus* program is unique in that it delivers a standard recruit training curriculum, meeting national standards, on nights and weekends to accommodate the schedule of firefighters in suburban and rural areas such as Essex County. Bringing the training closer to the firefighters often means more firefighters can participate. All of the classes for this program were held in Essex County. The Massachusetts Firefighting Academy, a division of the Department of Fire Services, offers this program, tuition-free. The Fire Chiefs' Association of Massachusetts persuaded the Legislature to financially support this innovative delivery of off-site training.

Farrar said, "The academy welcomes the challenge to deliver rigorous training to firefighters in new and innovative ways and different formats that make the best possible use of available resources. The *Firefighter I Plus* program is an example how we can meet this challenge."

The thirty-one graduates, thirty men and one woman, represent the fire departments of: Bedford, Georgetown, Groveland, Hamilton, Ipswich, Merrimac, Middleton, Nahant, Rockport, Rowley, Salisbury, Topsfield, W. Newbury, and Wenham.

Today's Fire Department Does Much More than Fight Fires

Today's firefighters do far more than fight fires. They are the first ones called to respond to chemical and environmental emergencies ranging from the suspected presence of carbon monoxide to a gas leak. They may be called to rescue a child who has fallen through the ice or who has locked himself in a bathroom. They rescue people from stalled elevators and

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those who are trapped in vehicle accidents. They test and maintain their equipment, ranging from self-contained breathing apparatus to hydrants, hoses, power tools, and apparatus.

In this Massachusetts Firefighting Academy program, they learn all these skills and more from certified fire instructors who are also experienced firefighters. Students learn all the basic skills they need to respond to fires and to contain and control them. They are also given training in public fire education, incident command, hazardous material incident mitigation, flammable liquids, self-contained breathing apparatus, stress management, water rescue procedures, confined space rescue techniques, and rappelling. The intensive program includes classroom instruction, physical fitness training, firefighter skills training and live firefighting practice. Graduates have completed 140 hours of training on nights and weekends.

Basic Firefighter Skills

Students receive classroom training in all basic firefighter skills. They practice first under non-fire conditions and then during controlled fire conditions. To graduate, students must demonstrate proficiency in life safety, search and rescue, ladder operations, water supply, pump operation, and fire attack. Fire attack operations range from mailbox fires to multiple-floor or multiple room structural fires. Upon successful completion of the *Firefighter I Plus* program, these firefighters are now be eligible to take an examination for certification to the level of Firefighter I by the Massachusetts Fire Training Council.